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SUBJECT: SUDAN - AU REJECTS SUPPORT TO JEM SPLINTER GROUP

REF: A. STATE 102475

1B. ADDIS ABABA 1615

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Dissident representatives of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a non-signatory to the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), seek USD 200,000 to hold a party congress in Addis Ababa to replace JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim Muhammed. While the JEM representatives have approached the United States, Canada, the UK, the EU, and the African Union to request assistance, neither the AU Commission nor partner countries or organizations are currently considering providing any financial support in response. AU officials underscore the need for the AU to maintain its neutrality among parties in Darfur, particularly as it anticipates organizing a lengthy Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation that is to include civil society and numerous local groups in Darfur. An academic expert on Sudan considers the JEM to be numerically insignificant, and questions the utility of supporting a splinter group of the JEM. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Poloff has discussed request by UK and UAE JEM representatives, Ibrahim Abdalla and Yousif Abaker for assistance to organize a party congress to replace Khalil Ibrahim Muhammed (refs A-B), with AU Commission officials as well as with representatives of Addis Ababa-based partners of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS): NATO, UN, EU, Canada, Japan, and European allies, including Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK.

13. (SBU) In addition to Post, the JEM representatives have also made the same request independently to the Canadian and UK Embassies, as well as to the AU and the European Commission. No partner has announced any intention to provide financial assistance for this proposed JEM congress. On June 20, the JEM splinter group representatives provided the U.S. and Canada with a two-page budget proposal requesting USD 200,000 for a proposed three-day congress in mid-July, half of which is to cover airfare for 200 persons to fly to Addis Ababa.

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AU SEEKS TO MAINTAIN NEUTRALITY AMONG DARFUR PARTIES  
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14. (SBU) Key AU officials responsible either for Sudan or other peace and security issues have stated that the AU Commission does not intend to provide support for such a JEM congress, for fear of jeopardizing the AU's neutrality. In a meeting with poloff and other partner representatives on June 19, AU Darfur Integrated Task Force POLAD Dr. Solomon Gomes acknowledged that AU Commission Chairperson Alpha Oumar

Konare had received the request for assistance from the breakaway JEM representatives, but said that Konare had not met with them. Moreover, Gomes observed that as the AU was responsible for organizing the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue among civil society and other local groups in Darfur, the AU needed to maintain strict neutrality and objectivity. Therefore, he explained, the AU could not be seen as promoting or participating in a process to remove leaders of a particular movement.

15. (SBU) In a June 13 briefing by AU Commission Conflict Management Director El-Ghassim Wane to AU partner heads of mission, Wane acknowledged that the AU had met with "a number of rebels," but could not confirm a specific meeting with Ibrahim Abdalla and Yousif Abaker. Wane stated that the AU's response to such requests was that signing a statement of commitment (as several representatives of the Abdulwahid faction of SLM/A had done on June 8) to the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was a prerequisite for discussions on the DPA. Asked the AU's response to the June 7 "Joint Statement of Darfur Leaders Abstaining from Signing on Abuja" (signed in Asmara by Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige, JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim Mohamed, Abdulwahid Mohamed Nour, and Khamis Abdalla Abakr), Wane referred to the most recent AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) meeting on Darfur. "Our response is our communique of 15 May," he said. (NOTE: The May 15 AU PSC communique, inter alia, "regrets the failure" of the JEM and Abdulwahid faction of SLM/A to sign the DPA, urges signature by May 31, "failing which it shall consider measures, including sanctions, to be applied against the leadership and members of concerned groups." END NOTE.)

16. (SBU) Poloff discussed the degree of popular support for the JEM with Director of the French Institute for Ethiopian Studies Prof. Gerard Prunier, author of a recent book on Darfur and a long-time observer of Sudan and Horn of Africa issues. Prunier underscored the small size of the JEM, noting that the entire movement was smaller than splinter groups of the SLM/A, and that it represented a small percentage of the population in Darfur. Given the JEM's limited numbers, Prunier questioned sponsoring a "splinter group of a splinter group," and said the resulting faction would be politically insignificant.

17. (SBU) As instructed by ref A, Post will underscore AU's lead on Darfur and possible sanctions against DPA non-signatories in any future discussions with the JEM representatives. The AU will discuss the DPA at a June 23 meeting of the Joint Commission in Addis Ababa convened by AU Special Representative for Sudan Amb. Baba Gana Kingibe; a ministerial-level AU PSC is expected to address next steps against DPA non-signatories at the AU Summit on June 27.

HUDDLESTON